IMPERIAL MYCOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
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REPORT OF THE AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT, DOMINICA, FOR THE YEAR 1940.

1. **Staff.**—No change in personnel occurred within the calendar year, but the Agricultural Superintendent, Mr. F. G. HARCOURT, was again seconded for six months' service in the Leeward Islands on the 5th January, 1941. During such absences the senior officers are reduced to one and additional responsibility also devolves upon the local staff.

2. **Policy.**—The department implements Government policy and co-operates with other departments and with various committees on which it is represented. It also acts on the advice of the Advisory Department of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and since December, that of the Inspector-General of Agriculture for the West Indies. The policy of the department is thus largely prescribed for it, while itself advising before-hand and using its discretion in details. As briefly indicated in Section III, increasing attention is being given to the needs of the peasantry.

3. **Form of Report.**—On instructions from the Secretary of State, this report does not include the usual tables. The returns of exports and imports for 1939 and 1940 appeared in Nos. 6 and 7 of the *Official Gazette*, 1941. The last full report was for the year 1938 and agricultural development is proceeding on similar lines.

SECTION II. AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES.

1. **Weather Conditions.**—Even on the windward coast, the dry season was unusually long, starting in January and lasting till late in June. On the leeward coast, it was particularly severe and in several localities the water supply was threatened At the Botanic Gardens the total rainfall to the 30th of September was only 29.75, and for the year 59.68 inches, the corresponding averages for the previous 20 years being 53.56 and 75.84 inches. The fresh fruit trade, and cacao, food crops and livestock near the coast, were most affected. The effects on production were nevertheless far from injurious on balance, probably because in a normal year torrential rains often badly wash the steep hillsides where many of the cultivations are situated. Meteorological records were kept by the department and returns of rainfall submitted by planters as usual.

2. **Trade** —Imports were valued at £94,853 and £98,790 in 1939 and 1940, and exports, of which the great majority are agricultural products, were valued at £65,077 and £92,588 f.o.b.

The adverse balance was thus reduced, but the position is far from satisfactory for a population estimated to exceed fifty thousand.

3. **Foodstuffs.**—Increased activity occurred in the planting of local food crops, chiefly ground provisions, and a surplus was available for disposal in neighbouring islands. Food crops are largely produced by shifting cultivation and attempts to encourage sounder methods combined with a wider use of animals are meeting with only spasmodic response. Imported foodstuffs, mainly flour, sugar, salt fish, oils and fats average well under 20/- per head of the population per annum. The whole question of nutrition was examined by a committee consisting of the Agricultural Superintendent, (Chairman,) the Senior Medical Officer and the Education Officer, (Secretary.)

4. **Export Crops.—Lime products** were exported in increased quantities on account of an unusually good crop combined with higher prices, and f.o.b. values were nearly half the domestic exports. The results of replanting with budded limes are now becoming more marked, but the area under this crop is limited by withertip disease. The bulk of the crop was utilised for distilled oil or raw lime juice. Rather more green limes were shipped than in recent years.

Bananas.—The decline referred to in last year's report was to some extent arrested, and Dominica was the only colony in the Eastern Group which registered an increase. Most of the fruit is shipped under contract to the Canadian Banana Co. through the Dominica Banana Association. A proportion goes to Antigua by sloop. Low prices combined with transport diffiulties are deterrents, much of the fruit being grown in remote forest gardens.

Other Fruits include oranges shipped in barrels to West Indian islands, chiefly Barbados. Details of the main trade are given under Government Marketing Depot in Section III.

Cocoa.—Quantities were much better and prices slightly so, but the latter do not encourage most producers.

Coconuts.—These are in a category similar to cacao, the chief difference being that on several estates the trees are young and production is gradually increasing. Select nuts were more profitable than copra, but returns prevented planters from effecting much improvement in cultivation.

Vanillas.—Although exports were little more than in 1939, average f.o.b. values were extraordinarily high. The vanilla boom has greatly increased praedial larcency, which, together with that of other produce, is receiving attention.

Canes.—Exports of rum were further reduced, partly owing to a shortage due largely to failure to replant or manure canes after a reasonable period of ratoons. The syrup from which the rum is made is a direct product and both are in considerable local demand.

Tobacco Products were also mainly utilised for home consumption. Only one estate grows tobacco and operates a factory, importing some of the raw materials. The popularity of its manufactures, especially cigarettes, is increasing.

Bay Products, mainly bay oil, continue to provide a not very profitable peasants' industry, which has therefore fallen off somewhat.

Other Products are produced in great variety and a small surplus was exported to other islands and to more distant markets. Means of extension are being sought.

5. **Livestock.**—The number of cattle is thought to be dwindling but market statistics do not confirm this. The numbers and quality of some other stock, notably equines, are also declining. There is no veterinary department.

6. **Forest Products.**—These result from uncontrolled deforestation in the absence of a forestry department. A demand exists in Antigua for hand-processed lumber of various kinds and firewood sometimes goes to Barbados.

7. **Fisheries.**—Fishing is an important industry on the leeward coast, but dangerous and spasmodic on the Atlantic side.

SECTION III.—WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT.

1. **The Botanic Gardens, etc.**—The Gardens were maintained in good order, as also the grounds at the Library, Memorial Park, Morne Bruce and Military Cemetery. Cricket pitches were provided for the Windward Islands tournament and assistance was rendered with the planting of Windsor Park. The economic plots received the usual attention and some new plantings were made. Pot nursery work and exchange abroad were somewhat curtailed owing to the war The Foreman of the Gardens surpervises other work at headquarters.

2. **Plant Distribution.**—This was again a major concern of the department. Owing to reduced funds and exceptionally dry weather, rather fewer grafted plants, chiefly limes and oranges, together with canes and other economic plants, were produced. They are sold at cheap rates, mainly to peasants. The quantity of imported vegetable seeds retailed at cost increased.

3. **Lime Experiment Station.**—There are fifteen lime trial plots, sub-divided into two, three or four treatments and involving as many as three weekly pickings at the height of the crop, which was the best since the budded trees were planted. One new lime plot was planted. There are also plots of coconuts, grapefruit, oranges and lemons. No marked relative changes have occurred in sub-plots since 1939. Revenue exceeded expenditure.

4. **Government Fruit Farm.**—The writer continued to manage the farm till it was sold on the 7th October. Experiments with oranges and grapefruit clearly indicated the value of coral lime on light and medium soils, and phosphates on a heavy loam.

5. **Pests and Diseases.**– No serious losses of crop were observed. The inspectors' returns showed an average incidence of 0.79% Panama Disease in 16,758 banana stools inspected monthly. Control work was regularly performed in the case of two infections of Cercospora Leaf Spot disease. *Diaprepes spp.* continued to feed on the roots of citrus, especially limes. Affected trees responded well to the bareroot treatment.

6. **Advisory Work and Instruction.** — No radical changes occurred in 1940. The Peasants' Adviser and five Banana Inspectors, whose work was again extended to deal with general agriculture amongst the peasantry, operated the more populous districts. Their numbers are to be increased. The usual laboratory tests were carried out by the Clerk and analyses of milk by the writer. Bulletins were prepared for the local newspapers and pamphlets distributed to agriculturists. Departmental pupils and boys of the Grammar School received routine courses of instruction, the former principally outdoors.

7. **Livestock.**—Three British Alphine grade goats were at service, and the draft estimates for 1941 provide £100 for purchase of other stock.

8. **Government Marketing Depot and Cold Storage.** —The number of packages of fruit dealt with decreased owing to light crops and in some instances market restrictions. All business was again done on a consignment basis, mainly with Canada and Bermuda. The new gassing chambers and colour-adding plant improved the appearance of oranges and enabled the Manager to make satisfactory returns to growers despite severe competition. Other products included limes, grapefruit (gas-coloured,) mangoes and avocadoes, together with small quantities of lemons, coconuts, arrowroot and pumpkins. The engines, packing house machinery and ice-making plant were maintained in good order and revenue exceeded ordinary expenditure.

SECTION IV.—EXPENDITURE.

Expenditure was rigidly curtailed wherever possible.

SECTION V.—LEGISLATION.

In August, the Limes Export Levy Ordinance, No. 17 of 1940 and the Dominica Limes Association Ordinance, No. 18 of 1940, were enacted at the request of the Association to enable it to obtain funds by voluntary levy and co-operate with the West Indian Limes Association formed in 1941.

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Dominica, B. W. I.
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